



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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*Office of the United States Attorney  
District of Arizona*

For Information Contact Public Affairs  
WYN HORNBUCKLE  
Telephone: (602) 514-7625  
Cell: (602) 525-2681

## **TWO WOMEN SENTENCED TO PRISON FOR SMUGGLING CHILDREN INTO THE U.S.**

TUCSON – Wendolyne Mendez-Herrera, 33, of Nogales, Sonora, Mexico, was sentenced here to 15 months in prison, and two years of supervised release, by U.S. District Judge John M. Roll. Mendez-Herrera had pleaded guilty on July 31, 2006, to conspiring to transport an illegal alien.

In an unrelated case, Maria Espindola-Monge, 39, of Phoenix, Arizona was sentenced yesterday to 15 months in prison, and two years of supervised release, by U.S. District Judge Cindy K. Jorgenson. Espindola-Monge pleaded guilty on June 12, 2006, to conspiring to transport an illegal alien.

On July 2, 2006, Mendez-Herrera presented herself for admission into the United States at the port of entry in Nogales, Arizona. She was accompanied by two juveniles, ages 15 and 12, who she claimed were her sons. Mendez-Herrera claimed that both she and the juveniles were U.S. citizens. Further investigation revealed that both juveniles were Mexican citizens, and that Mendez-Herrera was to receive \$300.00 to smuggle the juveniles into the United States.

On October 31, 2005, Espindola-Monge also presented herself for admission into the United States at the port of entry in Nogales, Arizona. She was accompanied by two children, a six year old boy, and a four year old girl, who she claimed were her children. Espindola-Monge claimed that both she and the children were U.S. citizens. Further investigation revealed that both children were Mexican citizens, and that Espindola-Monge was to receive \$500.00 to smuggle the children into the United States.

At the sentencing, Espindola-Monge's defense counsel told Judge Jorgenson that Espindola-Monge - who is a legal permanent resident alien and the mother of ten children, all of whom are U.S. citizens - would lose her resident alien status as a result of this conviction. Her defense counsel asked Judge Jorgenson to warn Espindola-Monge that after her deportation at the conclusion of her sentence, she will not be able to re-enter the United States for any reason.

The investigation in both cases was conducted by Customs and Border Protection, Nogales, of the Department of Homeland Security. The prosecutions were handled by Cynthia R. Wood, Assistant U.S. Attorney, District of Arizona, Tucson, Ariz.

CASE NUMBER: CR-06-1302 (Mendez-Herrera)  
CR-05-2227(Espindola-Monge)  
RELEASE NUMBER: 2006-235 (Mendez-Herrera & Espindola-Monge)

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